



**RELIGIOUS SKEPTICISM IN THOMAS PAINE'S ESSAY ENTITLED  
*THE AGE OF REASON (PART I)***

**A THESIS**

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## **PRONOUNCEMENT**

The writer states truthfully that this thesis is compiled by her without taking any results from other researchers in S-1, S-2, S-3 and in diploma degree of any universities. In addition, the writer also ascertains that she does not take the material from other publications or someone's work except for the references mentioned.

Semarang, October 2015

Nadia Faradhillah

## MOTTO AND DEDICATION

*Siapa yang menghendaki kehidupan dunia maka dapat dicapai dengan ilmu. Siapa menghendaki kehidupan akhirat juga dicapai dengan ilmu. Dan siapa yang menghendaki kehidupan dunia dan akhirat, keduanya dapat dicapai dengan ilmu.”*

**Rasulullah SAW**

*Tidak ada salahnya di dunia terdapat banyak agama sebab semua itu menjelaskan sudut-sudut tertentu dari kebenaran.*

**Prof. Dr. Amsal Bakhtiar, M.A.**

*Be like a duck. Calm on the surface, but always paddling like the dickens underneath.*

**Michael Caine**

*This thesis is dedicated to  
My beloved mother and  
to everyone who help me accomplish this thesis.*

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Finally, the writer expects that this thesis will be useful to the reader who wishes to learn something about religious skepticism.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

TITLE.....	i
PRONOUNCEMENT .....	ii
MOTTO AND DEDICATION .....	iii
APPROVAL.....	iv
VALIDATION.....	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT .....	vi
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	ix
ABSTRAK .....	xii
CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION .....	1
1.1 Background of The Study .....	1
1.2 Scope of The Study .....	2
1.3 Purpose of The Study .....	2
1.4 Methods of The Study .....	3
1.4.1 Method of Research .....	3
1.4.2 Method of Approach .....	3
1.5 Organization of The Writing .....	4
CHAPTER II BIOGRAPHY OF THE AUTHOR AND SUMMARY OF THE ESSAY .....	6
2.1 Biography of Thomas Paine.....	6
2.2 Summary of <i>The Age of Reason (Part I)</i> .....	8
CHAPTER III REVIEW OF LITERATURE .....	12
3.1 Essay in The Context of Nonfiction Literary Work.....	12
3.2 The Concept of Religion .....	15
3.3 The Concept of Deism.....	17
3.4 Religious Skepticism.....	20
CHAPTER IV RELIGIOUS SKEPTICISM IN THOMAS PAINE’S ESSAY ENTITLED <i>THE AGE OF REASON (PART I)</i> .....	24
4.1 Deism in <i>The Age of Reason (Part I)</i> .....	24

4.2 Religious Skepticism in <i>The Age of Reason (Part I)</i> .....	34
4.2.1 Creed .....	34
4.2.2 Code .....	39
4.2.3 Cultus .....	41
4.2.4 Community.....	42
4.2.5 Bible as The Word of God .....	43
CHAPTER V CONCLUSION .....	48
Bibliography.....	50

## ABSTRAK

Esai *The Age of Reason (Part I)* merupakan sebuah tulisan yang berisi pandangan Thomas Paine mengenai agama. Dalam esai ini, Paine mengungkapkan argumennya mengenai hubungan antara keberadaan Tuhan dan kebenaran sebuah agama. Argumen-argumen tersebut disusun berdasarkan kepercayaan Paine terhadap paham Deisme. Pada akhirnya, paham Deisme lah yang membuat Thomas Paine menjadi seseorang yang skeptis terhadap agama.

Skripsi ini menganalisis sikap skeptis Thomas Paine terhadap institusi agama. Penulis memilih esai *The Age of Reason (Part I)* yang ditulis oleh Thomas Paine sebagai objek penelitian. Hal yang menjadi fokus dalam skripsi ini adalah bagaimana argumen-argumen Thomas Paine menunjukkan keyakinannya terhadap Deisme, dan membuatnya menjadi seseorang yang skeptis terhadap agama. Untuk mengetahui hal ini, penulis menggunakan pendekatan filsafat agama dengan memakai teori *Religious Skepticism* milik J. L. Schellenberg.

Dari analisis, dapat disimpulkan bahwa keyakinan Thomas Paine terhadap Deisme memiliki arti penting terhadap sikap skeptisnya pada agama. Deisme yang mengutamakan penggunaan akal dalam memahami agama menemukan banyak kesalahan yang terdapat pada institusi agama sehingga membuat sikap skeptis Thomas Paine terhadap agama semakin besar.

**Kata kunci:** *agama, deisme, sikap skeptis pada agama*

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of The Study

There is a lot of ways to convey opinion about a certain issue. It can be done in writing or orally. Essay is the most common written form to express human's thought. Blake and McBee state that essay is a kind of literary work reflecting the writer's idea towards certain issues. Moreover, essay has various characteristics depend on the issue that is brought up by the writer. It may discuss an important issue or a strange one. On the other hand, the form of essay also can be differentiated into systematic and casual. Furthermore, there are four types of essay: description, exposition, argumentation, and narration (Blake and McBee, 1981: xi). *The Age of Reason (Part I)* by Thomas Paine is an example of argumentation essay. An argumentation essay is a type of essay that conveys the thought of the writer towards a certain issue, and it usually heads for persuading public assumption to choose pros and cons for that issue (Blake and McBee, 1981: xi).

*The Age of Reason (Part I)*, actually called *The Age of Reason: Being an Investigation of True and Fabulous Theology*, expresses Thomas Paine's thought about the orthodox Christianity. Published in January 1794, *The Age of Reason (Part I)* helped popularized deism (Foner, 1995: 846). Through this essay, Thomas Paine explains that there was too much political power and was often corrupt in the institution of the church (Bakhtiar, 2007: 91). His refusal towards

the church authority leads him to a doubtful feeling towards religion. He refuses every idea about God that comes from divine revelation. According to him, the only way to utter God's existence is by using the human reason (Bakhtiar, 2007: 91). This idea attracts the writer to make further study to religious skepticism towards organized religions. Therefore, the writer wants to discuss the issue of religious skepticism in Thomas Paine's *The Age of Reason (Part I)*. It is because the writer wants to show Thomas Paine's idea towards religion, especially organized religions throughout the world.

### **1.2 Scope of The Study**

Some limitations are made in this paper to make it clear for the paper direction of the research. These limitations are needed so that the writer will not go beyond the area of the study. The writer discusses the components of religious system, deism, and religious skepticism in *The Age of Reason (Part I)*.

### **1.3 Purpose of The Study**

The main aim of the study is to understand the issue religious skepticism in *The Age of Reason (Part I)*. Furthermore, the purpose of this study is to observe the concept of religion and discuss the idea of deism proposed by Thomas Paine in *The Age of Reason (Part I)* that leads him to be a skeptic towards religions.

## **1.4 Methods of The Study**

### **1.4.1 Method of Research**

The writer uses library research method to get the data for the paper through books, internet website, and e-books in discussing the problem on this paper. According to Hikmat, method of research is a systematical steps required to carry out a research (Hikmat, 2011: 98). Library research is analyzing the source of research acquired from books, internet websites, journals, and other media using both sounds and pictures, such as video and television (Semi, 2012: 10). This method put the writer in necessity to collect the data, put those data into a research document, and cite them as references for the writer's research.

### **1.4.2 Method of Approach**

Semi states that method of approach is a view or comprehension that is applied in observing and analyzing the object of the study (Semi, 2012:79). The writer uses the philosophy of religion approach in this thesis. Philosophy of religion is an effort in discussing the main elements of religion. Moreover, this effort should be visceral, rational, comprehensive, systematic, logic, and free (Bakhtiar, 2007:14). On the other hand, Shipka in Minton states that philosophy of religion is a study of religious belief in a society. It is intended to prove or make certain whether religious belief is true (Minton in Sipka, 1996: 18). However, in another explanation it is said that philosophy of religion is a branch of philosophy which studies the basis of religion logically and freely. The study is not intended to find out the validity of any religions so that it is not bound by the religious precepts (Nasution, 1975: 8). The writer applies this approach to

understand the concept of religions in excavating the meaning of religious skepticism in *The Age of Reason (Part I)*.

## **1.5 Organization of The Writing**

### **1.5.1 Chapter I**

Chapter one contains the introduction. The introduction consists of background of the study, purpose of the study, scope of the study, methods of the study, and the organization of the study

### **1.5.2 Chapter II**

There are biography of the author and summary of *The Age of Reason (Part I)* in chapter II. The biography of the author discusses the life and works of Thomas Paine. While summary of *The Age of Reason (Part I)* presents a brief description about the contents of *The Age of Reason (Part I)*.

### **1.5.3 Chapter III**

Chapter III shows review of literature. It covers the literature review that will be used to support the writing of this paper. The theory deals with the definition and structure of essay. It also discusses the philosophical religion that has further capture in the concept of deity, religion, and religious skepticism.

### **1.5.4 Chapter IV**

This chapter contains the discussion of religious skepticism in Thomas Paine's essay entitled *The Age of Reason (Part I)*. Chapter IV describes,

discusses, and analyzes the basic subjects written in the scope of the study and the purpose of the study. The analysis made in this chapter is supported by review of literature presented in Chapter III

#### **1.5.5 Chapter V**

The last chapter contains conclusion. This chapter includes the summary of the basic points from Chapter IV.



## **CHAPTER II**

### **BIOGRAPHY OF THE AUTHOR AND SUMMARY OF THE ESSAY**

#### **2.1 Biography of Thomas Paine**

Thomas Paine was born on 29<sup>th</sup> January 1737 in Thetford, Norfolk, England. His father, Joseph Pain, is a corsetmaker, and his mother, Frances Cocke Pain, is a daughter of Anglican Thetford lawyer (Foner, 1995: 833). By the age of 19, Paine worked for King of Prussia battleship when Seven Years War happened. However, he quitted this job after six months and started to work for corsetmaker in London. In 1757, Thomas Paine began to attend philosophy and science class (Foner, 1995: 833).

He went to London to meet his friend in 1774. There, he was introduced to Benjamin Franklin by his friend, George Lewis Scott. Benjamin Franklin became one of the most influential people in Paine's life as he helped Paine to migrate to Philadelphia (Foner, 1995: 834). After migrating to Philadelphia, in 1775, Paine became an editor for *The Pennsylvania Magazine; or American Monthly Museum* for about 18 months. On the other hand, he also wrote some political science articles to the magazine (Foner, 1995: 835).

A year afterwards, Paine produced his writing entitled *Common Sense* which gives a great influence to American Independence Day to happen. Paine also published his letter collections through Pennsylvania Press on April and May. These letters were published in order to protect American Independence and

republicanism. Moreover, another reason he published these letters is to oppose the critics that emerged towards his work, *Common Sense*. On November, he decided to join in American Army under George Washington's command. Nevertheless, he was only a month in the troop. On December, he left the army and came back to Philadelphia to write *The American Crisis Number I*. This work was intended to rebuild the spirit of American troops after being defeated in New York and New Jersey (Foner, 1995: 835).

In 1790, he started to correspond with Edmund Burke. In February, Edmund Burke delivered a speech underestimating France Revolution. After the speech, Burke started to write *Reflections* on the Revolution of France (Foner, 1995: 842). On March 1791, Paine wrote *Rights of Man* as an answer to Burke's *Reflections*. In this work, Paine criticized Burke's objection in his opinion at the new constitution established by French (Foner, 1995: 843).

By 1793, Thomas Paine began to write *The Age of Reason* during autumn. A year later, this work was published in Paris (Foner, 1995: 846). *The Age of Reason* is the most controversial work of Thomas Paine as it was considered to offend the Bible at that time. Paine states in this work that he believes in God as the First Creator. He said that acts of worship God is done by giving happiness to other people. He also does not believe in The Church as The Church is made by human to frighten and monopolize the society to gain power and profit from them (Suparman and Sobirin, 2003: 122). However, now, *The Age of Reason* is considered as a presentation of deism. In his opinion, *The Age of*

*Reason* does not mean to offend any religion, otherwise it means to show “a higher form of religion” (Conway, 1995: 106).

In October 1802, Thomas Paine came back to America and after years he still felt the controversy of *The Age of Reason*. He was suspected and avoided by his friends. He lived in his farm in New Rochelle for couple years before he died in New York on 8<sup>th</sup> June 1809 (Conway, 1995: 106). Thomas Paine was known as the most influential figure in US history. Some of his works inspire and prompt some important events in US history to happen. Moreover, his view toward deism give a big influence to US culture and society today (Suparman and Sobirin, 2003: 124).

## **2.2 Summary of *The Age of Reason* (Part I)**

Part one of *The Age of Reason* shows Thomas Paine's beliefs about God and religion. *The Age of Reason* is begun with Thomas Paine statement about his belief. He mentions that he believes in one God and the afterlife. However, he does not believe in organized religion that is established throughout the world, whether it is a Christian Church, Jewish Church, or Turkish Church. On the other hand, he says that his mind is his own church and the only way to be a religious person is by doing justice, loving mercy, and making other creature happy. Furthermore, he also states that he does not believe in the books that contain the revelation. For him, a revelation is the words of God that only reveal to a certain

person. It stops becoming a revelation when the person conveys it to the second and third person. Thus, when that person tries to deliver the revelation to others, people have a right for not believing it.

The next part of the essay discusses the ineptness of the Bible. Thomas Paine accuses that Bible is merely a hand work of the Christian Mythologists. It is not words of God as Jesus Christ does not write the book himself. Thomas Paine also says that the Bible is a transformation of Roman Mythology as it is written when Roman Mythology has a lot of influences in the world. At that time, Roman government creates certain figures that are frightened by the society to gain taxes and power from the people. Moreover, Paine believes that Bible is written by a group of Jewish poets since he finds out a lot of forms of poem inside the Bible. With these facts, he insists that Bible is not word from God. Based on his opinion, the word of God is conveyed in universal language so that people throughout the world will understand His words. Paine believes that God does not speak in human language. Human languages, either speech or printed, are progressively changed, and not to mention, the translation that may lead to very different meaning. Thomas Paine states that the word of God exists in something else. He concludes that the word of God is His creation that we see. There is no bound to explain the existence of God with His creation. No human invention can imitate the word of God that universally understands by every human in the world.

In the middle of Part I, Thomas Paine presents Deism by explaining science that is applied in the universe. He accuses that Christian Church has

changed the real theology into some human fantasies. According to him, the real theology discusses the greatness of The Creation, instead of the story about miracles. He also states that this universe has eternal principles made by God as a form of His kindness to human race. God had made these principles to help the human races to develop their level of life. These principles are often called as science. Paine insists that humans cannot invent science, they only discover it. Thus, by using science, humans apply it to invent objects practically to make their life easier. Moreover, the effect of the existence of science threatens Christian Church. Paine conveys when people start to understand and contemplate science, then they will realize that everything the Christian Church have preached is falsehood and imposition. People will use the greatest gift from God, their reason and sense, to unveil the truth. Therefore, the Christian Church hardly opposes the spread of science by forbidding science in school. In Paine's opinion the Christian Church have done cruelty towards humans' reason and sense because it covers the truth up from humans. According to him, the real religion system will walk along with truth and science together, instead of disagreeing it.

Paine ends the first part of *Age of Reason (Part I)* by discussing mystery, miracle, and prophesy, which he calls the three means has been imposed by Christian Mythologists. He insists that our reason will oppose the existence of mystery, miracle, and prophesy. Mystery, according to Paine, is something unknown, but still The Christian Church spreads it out to avoid the questions that appear as a result of their falsehood. Then, miracle explains unexpected event used by Christian Church to gain beliefs from people. Paine describes prophesy as

approximation that will happen in the future. After explaining mystery, miracle, and prophesy, Thomas Paine insist the real religion will not have the three of them because the real religion is about believing on God and doing kindness to other creature. The real religion is the reflection of what people think, see, taste, and feel. There is nothing to do with mystery, miracle, and prophesy.

It may be concluded that Paine, in *The Age of Reason (Part I)*, seeks to combat atheism. Paine's doubts towards organized religion were deep. Paine says in *The Age of Reason (Part I)* that he had thought such ideas for many years. Paine's ideas grew out of his idealistic view that the human condition could be better. Paine insists that the view he wants to express is that he strengthen his belief in the right of people to form their own opinions because denying the right of people to their own beliefs leads to slavery. Therefore, he says to examine all aspects of life, especially religion, with reason.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

#### **3.1 Essay in The Context of Nonfiction Literary Work**

Generally literary work is differentiated in to two types, fiction literary work and non fiction literary work. Sumardjo and Saini in Purba (2008: 5) state that fiction literary work is a creative work since the writers use a lot of imagery and figure of speech. The writers concern more in the use of language in the writing process. A fiction literary work takes form in poems and prose. On the other hand, a nonfiction literary work is a written work that mostly uses lexical instead of metaphorical words. The writers of nonfiction literary work tend to show facts and opinion towards some issues. This type of literary work takes form in essay, critic, biography, and autobiography (Sumardjo and Saini in Purba, 2008: 6).

Essay as a nonfiction literary work conveys information or fact to the readers. It also discusses the issues happen in the reality (Sumardjo and Saini in Purba, 2008: 5). Essay is one of the most common tools used by people to deliver their thought and belief to others. Through essay, people describe, explain, narrate, or even argue something. Essay is described as a realization of one's opinion or thought towards certain issue in written form. The subject of the essay may be varied to many things. It may discuss an important and global issue or a trifling and personal issue (Blake and McBee,

1981: xi). According to Purba (2008: 3), essay is a medium length composition containing personal idea arranged systematically that comes from observation and investigation. Other than personal idea, an essay usually has concept, attitude, point of view, and style that specifically owned by the writers. Moreover, an essay frequently tells the writers experiences and knowledge subjectively.

Essay as a nonfiction literary work is generally divided into four modes. They are description, narration, exposition, and argumentation. Each of them has their own purposes in conveying the writers' idea. The description is a form of essay that is also used in other types. Description essay usually pictures feeling, idea, reality, place, or person by using the five human's senses to get the information. The description essay is differentiated into two kinds, objective description and subjective description (Blake and McBee, 1981: 136)

The second type of essay is narration. The narration shows a series of events that happen in certain period of time. Narrative is categorized into two groups, factual narrative and imaginative narrative (Blake and McBee, 1981: 209). Then, the exposition is an essay that presents information. This type of essay is frequently seen in newspaper, nonfiction book, and magazine (Blake and McBee, 1981: 7).

The last type of essay is argumentation essay. The aim of this mode is to convince and persuade the readers so that they can approve the



writers' viewpoint on an issue. The argumentation is differentiated into two kinds, logical argumentation and persuasive argumentation. The logical argumentation is an essay that requests the reason or intellect of the readers. This type of essay depends on one's thinking process in comprehending the content of the essay (Blake and McBee, 1981:169).

For further study, logical argumentation essay is usually made by three different methods. The first of all is induction. Induction is a method that shows an essay as a sequence of facts and gives general truth as result. Next mode is deduction. Deduction is a method that starts with a general idea and leads to a narrower idea in the end of the essay. The last method is analogy. Analogy is a method that depicts the similarity of two things. This method regards if two things that have similarity in certain aspect, they will have similarity in the other aspect as well. According to Blake and McBee, however, this method may lead to the wrong conclusion (1981: 169).

Meanwhile, the persuasive argumentation means an argumentation essay which mostly needs support based on the readers' emotions. This type of essay depends on the power of words that is used by the writers to convince the readers to his or her point of view. However, there is a tendency that the readers will be not persuaded by the writers' idea if it is not supported by reasonable thinking. The readers will not agree to the idea if it is not accepted by their sense (Blake and McBee, 1981: 169). The power of an argument essay is laid on the evidence that are given to support the idea of the writers. Those evidence are supposed to be precise and legal so that there

will be no hesitation towards the idea offered by the writers (Blake and McBee, 1981: 170).

### **3.2 The Concept of Religion**

Etymologically, the word religion is derived from a Latin word, *relegere*. *Relegere* has two meanings which are to collect or to read. Thus, *relegere* is described as some collected ways to worship God. Beside, it is stated that the word religion is also derived from *religare* which means to bind. The word *religare* is related to religion precepts binding its followers. The bond comes from a highest reality so that the followers should obey the order that comes from that reality (Nasution in Bakhtiar, 2007: 11).

In the context of sociology, religion is a belief system that is professed and practiced by a group of people in the society. Their beliefs and practices are forms of interpretation of their feelings towards the highest reality and the sacred. According to him, a belief towards religion is different to other believes or ideologies because the base of belief towards religion is a concept of the existence of the highest reality and the sacred. This concept is different from the profane concept that is usually used in explaining other believes and ideologies (Robertson in Bakhtiar, 2007: 14).

The opposite opinion is expressed by Max Muller who says that the complete definition of religion is not reached yet because up till now the researchers still find out on the study about the origin of religion. As a result, the

exact and complete meaning of religion has not been realized yet (Muller in Bakhtiar, 2007:14).

Catherine Albanese tries to explain religion in different way. She benchmarks the study of religion is similar to ask a group of blind people to feel an elephant and describe it. She assumes, with no previous encounter between the blind people and the elephant, the blind people will have different definitions in explaining what an elephant is. By this analogy, Albanese tries to explain how most people try to find out the meaning of religion. She comes to the conclusion that humans' sense and reason have limitation in describing religion since it covers a lot of complex things (1992: 1).

Albanese divides religion into two kinds according to the way people live within and outside the boundaries of religion. They are ordinary religion and extraordinary religion. The first type, ordinary religion, is often related to culture. It can be said that ordinary religion is the source of unwritten rules that guide humans' lives. Ordinary religion also becomes a reason of the forming of norms that become the guidance of life in the society (1992: 6). The second type, extraordinary religion, is considered as the religion usually encountered by people. It takes form as a religion with belief system which has historical background, religious precepts, and certain boundaries. Extraordinary religion is regarded as a media connecting humans and The Supreme Beings (1992: 6).

Both ordinary and extraordinary religion have religious system formed by four elements. The first element is creed. Creed means the faith in God that influence the way of thinking and behaving. Creed contains set of belief, opinion,

and the way to go through the meaningful life. Albanese says that creed may take form in developed theologies, sacred stories of origins, or oral traditions (1992: 9). Next element is code. Code is described as a set of precepts and rules that arrange and bound humans' everyday life. According to Albanese the example of code may be traditional custom or moral system (1992: 9). Cultus is the third element. It is defined as the way how the followers respond to creed and code. It involves religious activities and figures (1992: 10). Finally, the last element is community. Community means a group of people that share the same creed, code, and cultus. A community may be an ethnic group or a congregation of organized religion (1992: 10).

The explanation of the elements that form religion can be concluded as the definition of religion according to Catherine Albanese, as she states “*religion here can be understood as a system of symbols (creed, code, cultus) by means of which people (a community) orient themselves in the world with reference to both ordinary and extraordinary powers, meanings, and values*” (1992: 11). Religion is not merely about the belief. It involves a lot of practices as well. The creed becomes the soul of religion. It becomes the main idea that presents in code, cultus, and community (1992: 10).

### **3.3 The Concept of Deism**

There is strong relation between religion and the ideology in deity concept. The ideology will determine people's attitude towards religion. Their beliefs in an ideology in deity concept help them contemplating and interpreting

religious propositions. As the result, people will decide whether to be skeptical or convinced towards a religious proposition. For instance, Thomas Paine conducts the religious skepticism because of his belief in the concept of deism.

The ideologies in the deity concept are considered as the world view towards The Supreme Being. The ideologies agree that God is The Creator of the universe. Nonetheless, they have different opinion in the way the God exist, the activity, and the relation between the God and nature. Deism is one ideology in deity concept (Bakhtiar, 2007: 79).

Deism regards that God is far away from His Creation. In deism, it is agreed that God create the universe, yet He ignores and stays away from His Creation after He had finished the process. Therefore, the universe works by the rules and provisions He made. The rules and provisions are so perfect that the universe does not need God anymore in its system. Thus, the universe will have its mechanism to repair itself when some disaster or damage happens. This ideology assumes God as an expert clockmaker. When the clock has been made, it will work by itself according to the mechanism that is been invented by the clockmaker (Nasution, 1975: 41).

The universe is assumed as a clock and it has constant mechanisms. Thus, Deism disagrees all knowledge that defies the nature's law, such as, miracle, revelation, and prayer. Miracle is commonly described as unusual phenomena done by a man of God. However, these phenomena oppose the natural's law that has been invented by God so that deism does not believe in the

power of miracle (Bakhtiar, 2007: 89). Moreover, deism also refuses to believe revelation and prayer because humans are gifted with sense and reason by God. As a result, humans need no help or consideration from God since they are able to decide what is good or bad for themselves (Nasution, 1975: 42).

The deists differentiate deism into four types. First of all, some deists believe that God totally ignores His creation, either the nature or the moral of His creature. The deists believe that God only does the work on the Creation. He made and programmed the rules and mechanism that is needed for the universe to work. However, after He had finished the Creation, He did not have a hand in what happen to His Creation. He is not giving any attention either to the universe or humans' behavior. Next one, there is a belief that God takes care what happen to the universe. It is believed that God is involved to the phenomena that happened in the universe. Despite this, He keeps ignoring to humans' moral. In this type of deism, humans have their own full right to choose their act, either good or bad. The third belief accepts that God takes care the events that happen to the universe and pay attention to humans' morality. This belief considers that God pays attention to humans' morality. Moreover, He expects them to obey the rules of humans' morality that He set when he made The Creation. Nevertheless, this type of deism does not believe of the afterlife. The deists of this belief accept the idea when a person die, his business in this world has done, and he will have no afterlife after his death. The last belief shows that God takes care to every single thing that happened to His Creation. It is said in this believe that God notices and involves both the events that happened in the universe and humans' moral. The

difference between this belief to the previous one is this belief accept the idea of afterlife. The deists believe that every person will has their consequences in this afterlife. Reward is for them who done good deeds when they live. Punishment is for them who done bad deed when they live (Geisler in Bakhtiar, 2007: 90).

Practically, deism becomes one of the ideologies in the deity concept that discusses and analyzes deeper issues related to religion and God critically. Deism relies on human reason and sense to analyze the issues. Thus, the result or conclusion is logically accepted by human reason. Moreover, the critical side of deism frequently evaluates religions that may be muddled with the local superstition. The muddle of the local superstition is able to make the religion swerve and leave the real core and codes (Bakhtiar, 2007: 92).

### **3.4 Religious Skepticism**

The term skeptic is derived from an ancient Greek word *skeptikoi*. This term forms since there was an institution of philosophy that ignores the desire to seek any truth to keep their traditional customs. The members of this institution tend to forbear them self to inquire the truth or some proposition. However, the original meaning of the word *skeptikoi* is people who try to find out the truth continually. The original meaning is similar to the idea that Sextus Empiricus has, the *skeptikoi* tend to “*persist in their investigation*” (Schellenberg, 2007: xi). While according to Schellenberg, skepticism involves doubts. He states that skepticism is unsettling feeling towards a proposition or idea whose truth and validity once was believed. The unsettling feeling comes from the disagreement

towards the proposition. Thus, the disagreement reduces someone's belief partially. Nonetheless, someone will still have belief in the proposition although it is not as strong as before (2005: 95). More simply, he states that skepticism is an attitude either to believe something or not. He mentions that skepticism is always followed by inquisitive behavior. Skeptics tend to question everything about the truth they doubt. They try to discover as much truth as they can to assure them towards the proposition (2005: 96).

Religious skepticism is a condition of doubt towards the truth of some detail of the religious proposition (Schellenberg in Schillbrack, 2013: 2). Moreover, he states there is an inclination that people formerly believe a religious proposition become in doubt to the proposition after they deepen some investigation to that religious proposition. The uncertainty or the doubts toward religious propositions is often related to the existence of God. However, Schellenberg says that the existence of God is not only the issue that causes someone to be a religious skeptic. There are another three issues that may lead some one to religious skepticism. These issues are concerned as the object of skepticism. Thus, there is four type of religious skepticism divided by its object (2005: 97).

Common skepticism is a condition of doubt towards the existence of God. The inquiry of the existence of God becomes the base of philosophy of religion as a lot of people always concern to this matter. Nevertheless, Schellenberg says that common skeptics may believe certain religious proposition.



He takes an example of someone that does not believe in God, but believes in something “*ultimate and salvific*” (2005: 97).

Categorical skepticism is a condition of being in doubt to religious propositions. In this case, categorical skeptics are uncertain whether any religious proposition is true or not. The fact that all of the religious propositions claim themselves to be the correct force them have no religious belief. The categorical skeptics are in doubt to the term “*something ultimate and salvific*”. Those terms refer to something that are preach by religion. The creed, the precepts, sacred stories brought by the religion is all doubtful to the categorical skeptics. Moreover, they doubt to the issue that the creed, precepts, and the other things related to certain religion will lead humans’ lives to the salvation. The only thing that is going to lead humans’ lives to salvation, according to the categorical skeptics, is the good deeds they do to other creatures (2005: 98).

The other type of religious skepticism assumes that humans’ capacity and capability do not support them to find out the truth in any religious proposition. Therefore, it is called capacity skepticism. The capacity skepticism is doubt whether human, with his definite condition, can find out at least the basic truth of religious proposition or not. The capacity skeptics are certain that human does not have enough resource to unveil the basic truth of religious proposition. Thus, this type of religious skepticism is the strongest of all as the capacity skeptics use their logic argument to prove their proposition (2005: 100).

While the last type of religious skepticism is a combination from two former types of religious skepticism, categorical skepticism and capacity

skepticism. It is called complete skepticism. Complete skepticism is doubtful condition of the existence of the true religious proposition that can lead humans' lives to salvation and the capability of humans to discover that kind of religious proposition (2005: 101).

## CHAPTER IV

### RELIGIOUS SKEPTICISM IN THOMAS PAINE’S ESSAY ENTITLED *THE AGE OF REASON (PART I)*

#### 4.1 Deism in *The Age of Reason (Part I)*

*The Age of Reason (Part I)* is a form of critic towards religious proposition, specifically Christian proposition. In the essay, Thomas Paine shows his disagreement towards the Christian proposition by presenting the concept and example of deism. He persuades his readers by showing some examples of reasonable thought about religion. Through giving an explanation and critical thinking towards deism to his readers, then, he captures the fallacies in Christian proposition that leads him to religious skepticism. There are four main points of deism that he presents in his essay. These ideas of deism are the basic device for him to dig out the fallacies in the Christian religion system.

This sentence shows the main idea about deism that is captured by Paine in his essay: “*The true Deist has but one Deity, and his religion consists in contemplating the power, wisdom, and benignity of the Deity in his works, and endeavoring to imitate him in everything moral, scientific, and mechanical*” (Section 11, Page 30). The quotation is the main idea of deism that Thomas Paine tries to convey in this essay. That quotation gives general picture of a deist and about his attitude towards religion and God. According to Paine, a deist believes in the existence of one God who has great power, wisdom, and kindness to His creatures. A deist is also able to comprehend the attributes of God through His

immense creation. Moreover, after comprehending the attributes of God, a Deist will respond by copying those attributes and applying them in the daily life. That is the way how a deist becomes a religious person. In comprehending the attributes of God, humans need to use their reason so that the religious attitude will not contradict to it. Reason is the basis for humans to comprehend religious proposition. The religious proposition based on reason will not cause any doubts towards that proposition. In other words, the more logic that is used, the stronger religious proposition that is believed.

According to Thomas Paine, the main idea about deism above has four supporting ideas. These ideas are the pillars of deism that is explained in this essay. The first idea is the existence of God as the ultimate cause of the universe. The second is The Creation and its complex mechanisms as the evidence that the God exists. The third idea is deists' refusal towards revelation, miracle, and mystery. The last idea is the deists' response to God's beneficences.

For the first idea, Thomas Paine states that a deist believes in the existence of Supreme Being who has authority in creating the universe. He mentions: "*The only idea man can affix to the name of God is that of a first cause, the cause of all things*" (Section 7, Page 19). The sentence indicates that deism recognize the existence of God as the cause of everything. Logically, everything must have the prime cause. Deism disagrees any ideas that everything has no cause. Thus, Deism considers that God is the one who is responsible for the existence of the universe.

The sentence above is supported by Paine's statement about the existence of God:

In like manner of reasoning, everything we behold carries in itself the internal evidence that it did not make itself. Every man is an evidence to himself that he did not make himself; neither could his father make himself, nor his grandfather, nor any of his race; neither could any tree, plant, or animal make itself, and it is the conviction arising from this evidence that carries us on, as it were, by necessity to belief of a first cause eternally existing, of a nature totally different to any material existence we know of, and by the power of which all things exist; and this first cause man calls God (Section 7, Page 20).

By stating the paragraph, Paine urges his readers to think logically. He mentions that nothing can make itself. Everything, either men or plants must have a cause that makes them. Therefore, the idea of a figure that creates the universe leads to a belief towards God. Paine affirms the existence of God by explaining how he contemplates the existence of God in this quotation:

I know I did not make myself, and yet I have existence; and by searching into the nature of the other things, I find that no other thing could make itself; and yet millions of other things exist; therefore it is that I know, by positive conclusion resulting from this search, that there is a power superior to all those things, and that power is God (Section 8, page 21).

This quotation shows Paine as the example. He realizes that neither he nor the other things can make itself. Things cannot emerge their own existence in the universe. Thus, he assumes that there is something out there which has infinite power have made everything in the universe. Paine concludes that something which has infinite power is God.

The three paragraphs above clearly explain Thomas Paine's opinion toward the existence of God. By using his sense, he contemplates and believes that the universe is created by God. There is only God who will be able to create such a complex system like the universe.

Nonetheless, Paine realizes that religious proposition is not only to discuss the existence of God. Moreover, he explains the reason why God creates the universe, it is because he wants to persuade his readers so that the readers will use their reasons in contemplating the meaning of religious proposition.

Thomas Paine finds that the first idea has strong relation to the second one. The second idea pictures The Creation as the evidence of the God's existence. In Deism, talking about God is the same as talking about His creation. It is for the reason that His creation is a genuine evidence which refers to the existence of God itself. Besides, His creation also becomes a mean that is used to understand His reason why He creates the universe. These paragraphs below, Thomas Paine tries to persuade his readers to think logically in understanding the reason why God creates the universe.

The first quotation is Paine's view towards how the real religion should be: *"That which is now called natural philosophy, embracing the whole circle of science, of which astronomy occupies the chief place, is the study of the works of God, and of the power and wisdom of God in his works, and is the true theology"* (Section 8, Page 22). Paine states that the real religion walks along science. Science is a mean that is used by men to contemplate the greatness of God and

His reason in creating the universe. This view matches the idea of Deism that considers science as perfect mechanism that carries out the universe.

It is the mechanism that keeps the lives of creatures in the earth. Furthermore, Paine mentions the explanation in this quotation: “*Every science has for its basis a system of principles as fixed and unalterable as those by which the universe is regulated and governed*” (Section 8, Page 22). In the quotation Paine states that God has made fully equipped universe with its basic mechanisms. Those mechanisms cannot be replaced by any others. The mechanisms also keep the universe on the track so that humans’ lives will constantly go on. Paine’s statement agrees with the view of deists that assume God as a giant watchmaker. God creates the universe as if it is a giant watch equipped with the mechanisms that make it works. When the making of the watch is done, the watch will operate without the God’s interference. The watch operates according to such a perfect mechanisms that if it is broken, it will mend itself using the mechanism that it has. Thus, in *The Age of Reason (Part I)*, Paine considers that science is the mechanisms of the universe that can be studied by men to help them contemplating the meaning of religion and the existence of God.

The idea of science as the mechanisms that carry out the universe makes Paine think that there are other lives in the other planets. His opinion is described in this sentence: “*There is room for millions of world as large or larger than ours, and each of them millions of miles apart from each other*” (Section 12, Page 32). The sentence above defines Paine’s conviction towards other lives outside the earth. In his opinion, God will not make the universe in vain. This universe is too

immense for the humans' lives in the earth alone. Therefore, Paine believes that there must be lives in other planets in this universe. Furthermore, Paine considers that the existence of lives outside the earth is a part of the mechanisms made by God so that men will be able to study the mechanism as science. Paine expresses more about this issue in this quotation:

It is an idea I have never lost sight of, that all our knowledge of science is derived from the revolutions (exhibited to our eye and from thence to our understanding) which those several planets or worlds of which our system is composed make in their circuit round the Sun (Section 13, Page 34).

The quotation shows the reason why God creates the universe fully equipped with its mechanisms. Paine believes that those mechanisms do not only act as the keeper and regulator of humans' lives, but they are also a mean for men to study science. As the result, if men can understand the science, then men can invent equipments to make their lives better.

The four quotations above describe the Deism view towards the creation of God. The quotations indicate that God has made fully equipped universe so that the universe will not require the role of God to carry out the lives in it. In Deism, the role of God is merely as the Creator and the main cause that gives this universe existence and lives for His creatures. On the other hand, the mechanisms that God made are meant to be the medium for humans to study so that they will be able to improve their lives. Thus, Paine considers that there are other lives outside the earth. In this way His creatures will study the science that occurs in their world. The four points are match to the view of Deism towards science. In



Deism, religion and science cannot be separated as both of them support each other's existence. Deism regards science as an important source to humans' reason and logic in contemplating religion.

The third idea captures deists' refusals towards revelation, mystery, and miracle. The excellence of using reason and logic in contemplating religion makes revelation, mystery, and miracle irrelevant to religion. This issue is quoted in this quotation: "*..., it is only an account of something which that person says was a revelation made to him; and though he may find himself obliged to believe it, it cannot be incumbent on me to believe it in the same manner; ...*" (Section 1, Page 6). This quotation contains Thomas Paine's refusal towards revelation that is conveyed by God to a person in a certain group of religion. He says that the revelation that is accepted by one becomes a revelation conveyed by God only to him. It is for the reason that, logically, God merely convey the revelation only to him. The other people do not see the event happens, so they do not have any responsibility to believe the revelation accepted by the first receiver.

In this case, Paine chooses not to believe in the revelation of God. He suspects that there may be falsehood in the revelation that is delivered by the first receiver. The reason of his vigilance towards revelation is his absence in the event of the revelation. He does not witness the event directly, so that there will be high possibility of falsehood in the revelation.

In the other paragraph Paine explain his disagreement towards mystery:

Religion, considered as a duty, is incumbent upon every living soul alike, and, therefore, must be on a level with the understanding and comprehension of all. Man does not learn religion as he learn secrets and mysteries of a trade. He learns the theory of religion by reflection. It arises of the action of his own mind upon the things which he sees, or upon what he may happen to hear or read, and the practice joins itself thereto (Section 14, Page 36).

The paragraph mentions that religion has no relation to mystery. According to Paine religion is a system that covers all aspects of humans' lives. Men should understand religion as a reflection and respond of the daily lives. The real religion does not have any mystery in its system because mystery means something that is rarely known by humans. However, the real religion does not contain something that is barely known by humans if they use their reason and logic to contemplate the religion. Mystery is something far related from reason and logic. Thus, it is concluded that Paine's refusal towards mystery suits the Deism view.

In the other quotation, Paine explains another superstitious thing usually found in organized religion: "*Mankind have conceived to themselves certain laws, by which what they call nature is supposed to act; and that miracle is something contrary to the operation and effect of those laws; ...*" (Section 14, Page 37). The quotation shows if one believes in religion, he certainly will not convince to miracle. Miracle works by opposing the natures and humans' reason. Thus, Paine states that miracle is impossible to happen.

In conclusion, deism, in contemplating religion, refuses the presence of revelation, mystery, and miracle because those superstitious things do not go along with humans' reason. Beside, the truth of those things cannot be proven by

the natures. With this result, Paine decided not to believe any of those superstitious things.

The fourth idea of deism in *The Age of Reason (Part I)* is the respond of deist towards the God's mercy to humans. The quotation explains the idea: "*I believe in the equality of man; and I believe that religious duties consist in doing justice, loving mercy, and endeavoring to make our fellow-creatures happy*" (Section 1, Page 4). The quotation presents Thomas Paine's view towards one's religious behavior. In his opinion, religious behavior is reflected in the good deeds done to the other creatures. The good deeds will cause happiness to the other creatures. Paine tries to plant this idea to his readers in the other paragraph: "..., *the only idea we can have of serving God, is that of contributing to the happiness of the living creation that God has made*" (Section 14, Page 36). The quotation mentions that doing good deeds to the other creatures is the only thing that men can do to pay all the God's kindness and mercy.

In the other quotation, Paine clarifies his opinion about making the other creatures happy:

It is as if He said to the inhabitants of this globe, that we call ours, 'I have made an earth for man to dwell upon, and I have rendered the starry heavens visible, to teach him science and the arts. He can now provide for his own comfort, and learn from my munificence to all, to be kind to each other' (Section 9, Page 24).

The quotation explains that God is merciful in giving His abundant love to men. He creates everything that is needed by men so that they can explore what He bestows. Men study science in order to improve their lives. This abundant love of

God to men is highlighted by the deists. They say that the only way to act religious behavior is by imitating the God's demeanor towards His creatures. God has created the fully equipped universe so that men can learn to increase the level of lives. Through His creation, God has supply humans with everything to fulfill their needs. In this way, humans who contemplate religion should be grateful by doing good deeds to the other creatures. With this result, men have reached the authentic comprehension of religion.

*"I believe in one God, and no more; and I hope for happiness beyond this life"* (Section 1, Page 4). In the quotation Thomas Paine emphasizes again that he is a deist. Deists convince that God as the Creator of the universe and that there is afterlife beyond death. It is believed that in this afterlife, humans will receive the consequences of the deeds done in their lives.

It is concluded that Thomas Paine's essay entitled *The Age of Reason (Part I)* has the view and belief toward deism. The view and belief is reflected in the quotation written, namely: the existence of God as the Creator of the universe and its perfect mechanisms, the creation of God and its mechanisms as learning media for men to improve their lives, the refusal towards revelation, mystery, and miracle because of its incompatibility to reason and logic, and the good deeds done to other creatures as a religious respond after contemplating religious proposition.

## 4.2 Religious Skepticism in *The Age of Reason (Part I)*

Deism believed by Thomas Paine makes him put the Christian religious proposition into question. From the four ideas of deism conveyed in his essay, he starts to doubt the truth of Christian religious proposition. In *The Age of Reason (Part I)* he discusses matters in Christian religious proposition and the Bible that seems strange to him. The strange matters in Christian religious proposition are discussed by presenting the fallacies in the elements of Christian religious system, namely: creed, code, cultus, and community. Nevertheless, in his essay, Paine discusses more fallacies in creed than any other elements. It is for the reason that creed is the most basic belief of a religion. By means of creed people believe and convince a religious proposition. Therefore, Thomas Paine skepticism or doubt pays more attention of creed in his essay.

### 4.2.1 Creed

His skepticism is begun by revealing that the sacred stories in Christian proposition are derived from the ancient mythology, such as: Roman mythology and Greek mythology. It is said in this quotation: “*It is curious to observe how the theory of what is called the Christian church sprung out of the tail of the heathen mythology*” (Section 2, Page 6). In the quotation, Paine mentions that the stories in Christian proposition are derivative of ancient mythology. It is proven by Paine’s analysis that there are so many similarities between sacred stories in Christian proposition and the ancient mythology. For example, the concept of trinity in Christian proposition comes from the number of Gods in the ancient mythology reduced in to three Gods. Besides, Christian proposition has symbols

that is also similar to the symbols in the ancient mythology, such as the existence of Virgin Mary is similar to Diana of Ephesus and the existence of saints are similar to the heroes.

Through the explanation, Paine questions the truth of the sacred stories in Christian proposition that have been believed by many people since hundred years ago. The sacred stories that become creed for Christians, Paine assumes, are the stories that is derived from the ancient stories of Roman and Greek mythology. In this case, Paine put the sacred stories into question. In his opinion, the possibility that the sacred stories in Christian proposition have ever happened is doubted.

Furthermore, the reason why there is high possibility that the sacred stories in Christian proposition are derivatives from the ancient mythology is that people is familiar and accustomed to believe the stories from the ancient mythology. It causes the Christian mythologists creates the story that does not diverge to the ancient belief becoming people's religion from time to time. This derivative will be easily accepted by people that are bound to the ancient belief.

In the essay, Thomas Paine frequently questions the creed that becomes the basis faith in Christian religious proposition. As he says in the quotation about his skepticism towards the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ:

The resurrection and ascension, supposing them to have taken place, admitted of public and ocular demonstration, like that of the ascension of a balloon, or the sun at noon-day, to all Jerusalem at least. A thing which everybody required to believe, requires that the proof and evidence of it should be equal to all, and universal;... (Section 2, Page 7).

Paine says that the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ is something that is difficult to believe because it is told that the event is merely witnessed by 8 or 9 people. In fact, the ascension of Jesus Christ should be the event that can be witnessed by a lot of people in the area, Jerusalem. However, Paine considers the story as Christian mythologists' creation to convince people about Jesus Christ's peculiarity as the son of God. Paine continues that a belief needs real evidence that can be validated by a lot of people. The evidence cannot be the event that is just witnessed by some people.

Paine again discusses Christian creed that takes form in the sacred story the resurrection and the ascension of Jesus Christ. The story has been spread and believed by a lot of people as the result the story becomes the basic faith in Christian proposition. In the quotation above Paine criticizes Christian creed that is related to the miracle that happen to Jesus Christ. Deism refusal towards the existence of miracle makes Paine doubt the truth in the story of Jesus Christ's resurrection and ascension. It is for the reason that the story can be neither accepted by reason nor validated by a lot of people.

In the other quotation Paine reveals how the story can be the creed for so many Christians:

That many good men have believed this strange fable, and lived very good lives under that belief (for credulity is not a crime), is what I have no doubt of. In the first place, they were educated to believe it, and they would have believed anything else in the same manner (Section 3, page 10).

The quotation indicates that all the written stories in the Bible have been convinced by a lot of Christians. Moreover, they will preach the story to their descendants so that the story will last for a long time. In this way, people believe the religion easily without any doubt. This matter opposes of what Paine believes. According to him, people should use their reason and sense in contemplating the religion. They should not believe all the stories that are preached to them because the truth of stories is strongly doubted. The quotation above shows Paine's disappointment to people's attitude which tends to ignore their religious skepticism and choose to accept and believe all the stories without further comprehending.

Moreover, Paine mentions his personal experience that triggers religious skepticism when he was young:

From the time I was capable of conceiving an idea and acting upon it by reflection, I either doubted the truth of the Christian system or thought it to be strange affair; I scarcely knew which it was, but I well remember, when about seven or eight years of age, hearing a sermon read by a relation of mine, who was a great devotee of the Church, upon the subject of what is called redemption by the death of the Son of God (Section 11, Page 30).

Paine tells about the event that happens when he was eight years old. He expresses his feeling towards the sermon that is preached his relatives. He thinks that the sermon about the redemption is strange.

Thomas Paine has understood the concept of religious skepticism since he was young. It is proven by what he describes in the quotation about the strange feeling towards the redemption done by the son of God. Religious skepticism



make him questions the story. It is impossible because it is such a strange fact that God send His innocent son to redeem men's sins. His skepticism gets stronger after he deepens his understanding on deism. He becomes more skeptical to the Christian creed that is deeply rooted in the faith of Christians.

On the other hand, Paine reveals the irrelevance of mystery, miracle, and prophesy in a religion. Paine assumes that their existence is fabricated: "*Upon the whole, mystery, miracle, and prophecy are appendages that belong to fabulous and not to true religion*" (Section 15, Page 40). The sentence states that mystery, miracle, and prophesy are part of fabulous religion. Fabulous religion means the religion that has fabricated and unreal basic faith. Mystery, miracle, and prophesy are merely a mean that is used to gain people's believes towards the religion. Mystery is a mean that takes over the stories from the past. Miracle takes over the stories from present. While prophesy takes over the stories from the future. Thus, Paine refuses the existence of mystery, miracle, and prophesy because they do not go along with reason and nature. The three of them are things that impossible to happen as they work opposing the mechanisms created by God. Therefore, mystery, miracle, and prophesy does not belong to the real religion. As the result, Paine becomes more skeptical towards religious creed, in this case, Christian's creed.

It is concluded that Paine's religious skepticism towards Christian's creed is clearly represented in those five quotations above. Thomas Paine considers that there are anomalies in the sacred stories in Christian proposition. Through the five quotations, it is known that there is high possibility that the

sacred stories of Christian proposition are the derivatives from the ancient mythology. The truth of the resurrection, ascension, and redemption cannot be validated. Moreover, the existence of mystery, miracle, and prophesy in the religion as faith bound. Thomas Paine, who convinces in Deism and comprehends religion by using his reason, does not approve all the stories that gradually become Christian creeds. According to him, the stories do not make any sense, so he doubts the Christian creed. Thus, his doubt towards Christian creed leads him to his skeptical attitude towards Christian proposition.

#### **4.2.2 Code**

Aside from discussing the Christian creed, Paine also explores the Christian code. The Christian code means the rules in Christian proposition that arrange Christians' lives. In this case, Paine questions the truth in the Christian code like he does to the Christian creed. In these two quotations, Paine shows his rejection to the Christian code:

Let him believe this, and he will live more consistently and morally than by any other system; it is by his being taught to contemplate himself as an outlaw, as an outcast, as a beggar, as a mumper, as one thrown, as it were, on a dunghill at an immense distance from his Creator, and who must make his approaches by creeping and cringing to intermediate beings, that he conceives either a contemptuous disregard for everything under the name of religion, or becomes indifferent, or turns what he calls devout. In the latter case, he consumes his life in grief, or the affectation of it; his prayers are reproaches; his humility is ingratitude; he calls himself a worm, and the fertile earth a dunghill; and all the blessings of life by the thankless name of vanities; he despises the choicest gift of God to man, the GIFT OF REASON; and having endeavored to force upon himself the belief of a system against which reason revolts, he ungratefully calls it human reason, as if man could give reason to himself (Section 7, Page 18).

The paragraph describes how a Christian lives his life and treats himself. Paine mentions that one is considered as a religious person when he carries out the rules in his religion. He supposes to regard himself with no respect for the sins of his life. It is as the proof that he muses things that happens to Jesus Christ who redeems men's sins. Beside, his disgrace towards himself is considered as his gratitude towards Jesus Christ who has redeemed his sins. Thus, he uses his days to live in apprehension and prayer. However, Thomas Paine regards that behavior is not religious at all. In *The Age of Reason (Part I)*, Paine disgraces people who live in that ethos. It is for the reason that people do not realize and thank the reason and sense as the gift which is given by God. Their ignorance towards reason and sense make people easily convinced to the strange and false code.

Paine doubts the Christian codes that asks the Christians to disgrace themselves because of their sins as the reflection to what had been done by Jesus Christ to men. The disgrace to oneself is also disgrace to the God who creates the men. If one has no self-respect, then he automatically disgrace his God who has creates him. Thus, Paine assumes that his prayer is no other than humiliation to his God. As the result, Paine doubts the truth of the Christian code.

In the other paragraph, he discusses the Christian church's attitude towards science:

But when a system of religion is made to grow out of a supposed system of creation that is not true, and to unite itself therewith in a manner almost inseparable therefrom, the case assumes an entirely different ground. It is then that errors not morally bad become fraught with the same mischiefs as if they were. It is then that the truth, though otherwise indifferent itself, becomes an essential by becoming the criterion that

either confirms by corresponding evidence, or denies by contradictory evidence, the reality of the religion itself. In this view of the case, it is the moral duty of man to obtain every possible evidence that the structure of the heavens, or any other part of creation affords, with respect to systems of religion. But this, the supporters or partisans of the Christian system, as if dreading the result, incessantly opposed, and not only rejected the sciences, but persecuted the professors (Section 10, Page 27).

The paragraph shows Paine's opinion that Christian proposition may not preach something that is morally wrong. However, if a religious system covers up the evidence that is related to the truth of the religion instead, then, the religious system has done a mistake. It is showed by the attitude of the church personages who reject science and punish the scientists who found the facts that opposite from what the Christian proposition preached. This code becomes a strange rule to behold. It becomes weirder when the Christians do not put this matter into question.

The creation and its mechanisms is the work of God. When a professor or a scientist found a fact in the God's creation, religion should support it instead of rejecting it. The rejection towards science automatically becomes the rejection towards God and His creation. This fallacy makes Paine more certain to doubt the truth in the Christian codes.

#### **4.2.3 Cultus**

The other element of religion that Paine is being skeptical to is cultus. Cultus is men's responses to the creed and code that are taken form in religious activities. Paine's skepticism towards Christian creed and code also spread to Christian cultus. In his essay, Paine restates that the religious activities in

Christian proposition are not the men's response to the existence of God.

Christian cultus is said as a mean to collect money. Paine says:

The invention of purgatory, and of the releasing of souls therefrom by prayers bought of the church with money; the selling of pardons, dispensations, and indulgences, are revenue laws, without bearing that name or carrying that appearance (Section 6, Page 17).

The sentence states that Christian proposition has consecration as one of its cultus.

In Paine's opinion the activity is merely Christian church's invention to collect money. It is not a response of men towards the existence of God because the consecration cannot be bought by money. The consecration is God's prerogative to men. Thus, even the church representative cannot give the consecration in the name of God to the sinful men. It is doubted by Paine that this strange matter of cultus exists in the Christian proposition.

#### **4.2.4 Community**

The last elements of religion in Thomas Paine essay is community that means a group of people that is bound by Christian creed, code, and cultus. In the beginning of his essay, Paine says that the organized religion cannot be trusted. He mentions the matter in this quotation: "*All national institutions of churches, whether Jewish, Christian or Turkish, appear to me no other than human inventions, set up to terrify and enslave mankind, and monopolize power and profit*" (Section 1, Page 4). According to Paine all the institutions of religion in the world is merely humans' invention, not the religion that comes from God. The organized religions are made to enslave and gain the power from men. In this

quotation, Paine expresses his refusal to the concept of organized religion because religion is merely used by the people in the institution. They use religion in order to fulfill their desire. These people have misused the purpose of religion as the connection between God and humans. The real religion should guide and give peaceful life to men. In contrast, religion indeed becomes something harmful and disturbs men's lives. Therefore, these irresponsible people make him more skeptical towards Christian proposition.

By discussing the four elements in Christian proposition, Thomas Paine shows his religious skepticism. Through holding onto deism he founds so many fallacies in the Christian religious elements. The creed, code, cultus, and community are the main basics to form Christian religious proposition. The fallacies that he founds make Paine doubts the truth of Christian proposition. In this case, Thomas Paine does not consider that Christian proposition is fully wrong, but Paine tends to think critically towards the four elements of Christian proposition.

#### **4.2.5 Bible as The Word of God**

Aside from the elements of Christian proposition, Paine also discusses the Bible as the word of God. He again disagrees this idea in his essay. According to him, either Bible or the other holy books are not the words of God. Those books are merely a mean that is invented by the institution to gather the followers. Paine says that it is impossible the word of God takes form in printed books with certain language. It is for the reason that God must not say in one language

understood by a group of people. Men come from different race and nation that have different languages. Thus, Paine states that God will deliver His words by something that is understood by men universally.

Moreover, he mentions that the word of God is something that humans cannot imitate, like a printed book. It is revealed in this quotation: “*THE WORD OF GOD IS THE CREATION WE BEHOLD and it is in this word, which no human invention can counterfeit or alter, that God speaketh universally to man*” (Section 7, Page 18). The creation is the real evidence of the word of God. The creation with its mechanism cannot be duplicated by anyone. God creates the universe so that men can fulfill their needs and improve their lives. The creation is also the mean of God to say His message to His creatures to do good deeds to the other creatures. It is also through the creation that God has given His mercy to humans. Therefore, Paine opposes against the idea that either Bible or the other holy books is the word of God. The bible is written in Hebrew. This makes people who do not understand Hebrew cannot comprehend the message that is delivered in the Bible. The translation of the Bible will not solve the language problem. The misinterpretation of Bible will make people do not accept the actual message of God. Those reasons make the Bible and the other holy books are impossible to be the word of God.

God only says His words by the media that is constant and unchangeable. The media is surely not a printed book in certain language and is translated in another language. Moreover, Paine mentions the importance of the creation as the word of God: “*It is only in the CREATION that all our ideas and conceptions of a*

*word of God can unite*" (Section 7, Page 19). Through His creation, God deliver His words. The creation captures His might as the prime cause and power. His creation is consistent and not changing. Men are able to contemplate the concept of deism and religion without any worry to the misinterpretation like what happen to the language. The creation is the language that is universally understood by all men in this world. The creation contains the creed, code, and cultus that is purely come from God.

Nonetheless, Paine keeps his critical thinking to this Bible matter. In the writing of his essay, Paine surely checks his notion of the Bible's truth as the word of God. He says in *The Age of Reason (Part I)*:

The only passage that occurs to me, that has any reference to the works of God, by which only his power and wisdom can be known, is related to have been spoken by Jesus Christ as a remedy against distrustful care. "Behold the lilies of the field, they toil not, neither do they spin." This, however, is far inferior to the allusions in Job and in the 19th Psalm; but it is similar in idea, and the modesty of the imagery is correspondent to the modesty of the man (Section 8, Page 21).

The quotation explains that Paine has researched the description of the God's creation in Bible. The only mentioning of the creation of God in the Bible is about the chant that is uttered by Jesus Christ towards illness. However, from the Paine's observation, the sentence is not the word of God. The sentence sounds like poetry that is made by a man because it has figurative speech. Thus, Paine has strong doubt towards Bible's position as the word of God.

It is concluded that Paine's skepticism towards the position of Bible as the word of God caused by some reason. First, the impossibility of language as the



media of the word of God because language constantly changes, so the word of God is impossible delivered by language. The last reason is the Bible's description towards the creation seems like poetry made by men. Therefore, Paine doubts the truth of Christian proposition that comes from Bible.

In *The Age of Reason (Part I)*, Thomas Paine states his skepticism to Christian religious proposition by critically examining the elements of Christian proposition and the Bible position as the word of God. Paine expresses his religious skepticism based on deism and reason. In this way he finds out that there are fallacies in the Christian creed, code, cultus, community, and Bible. He also reveals the relation between the reason and the evidence that lead him to religious skepticism towards Christian proposition:

It has been by rejecting the evidence that the word or works of God in the creation afford to our senses, and the action of our reason upon that evidence, that so many wild and whimsical systems of faith and of religion have been fabricated and set up. There may be many systems of religion that, so far from being morally bad, are in many respects morally good; but there can be but ONE that is true; and that one necessarily must, as it ever will, be in all things consistent with the ever-existing word of God that we behold in his works. But such is the strange construction of the Christian system of faith that every evidence the Heavens afford to man either directly contradicts it or renders it absurd (Section 13, Page 35).

The quotation shows Paine opinion that the organized religions have made men blind themselves to the evidence exposed by their reason. Paine assumes that there may be a lot of religions that preach morally good precepts. They ask people to make good deeds to each other. Nonetheless, Paine says that there is only one religion that is true. The religion consistently delivers the real message from God.

Christian, however, is doubted by Paine to deliver the word of God to people consistently.

Those quotations reveal the reasons that make Thomas Paine become skeptical towards Christian proposition. Nevertheless, in the quotation above he believes that there is at least one religious proposition that is true and consistent in deliver the word and precept from God. This belief makes him a kind of categorical skepticism towards religions.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

The result analysis shows that religious skepticism in *The Age of Reason (Part I)* has strong relation to deism concept that is believed by Thomas Paine. The four ideas of deism have important roles for Thomas Paine to formulate his skeptical attitude towards religion in his essay. The existence of God as the creator, His Creation and its mechanisms, the refusals towards supernatural things, and the good deeds to other men as the reflection of God's kindness to humans are the four ideas that play major role to form Thomas Paine's religious skepticism. Through the ideas, it is concluded that contemplating religion should be done by using reason and sense.

The priority of using reason and sense in contemplating religion causes so many doubts and questions towards religion, in this case Christian. Creed, code, cultus, and community are the elements of Christian religious proposition that are discussed by Thomas Paine in *The Age of Reason (Part I)*. Thomas Paine mentions that there are a lot of fallacies in the elements of Christian religious proposition if people involve sense and reason in contemplating religion. The sacred stories, the rules, the rituals, and even the people who have important role in the religion are put into questions. On the other hand, Thomas Paine also refuses the fact that Bible is the word of God because there is not enough valid evidence that can prove the Bible is the word of God. Paine says that the creation that people see is the genuine proof of the word of God.

From the analysis, the writer concludes that Thomas Paine prioritizes the using of sense and reason in contemplating religion. As the result, there are a lot of fallacies found in the Christian religious proposition. Those fallacies makes Thomas Paine possesses doubts towards Christian religious proposition. Thus, those doubts lead Paine to be a religious skeptic. Moreover, Thomas Paine believes in the existence of God as the creator of the universe and its mechanism, and so does he believe in the existence of religion that preaches the proposition which agrees with the concept of deism. Therefore, this believe makes him a categorical religious skeptic.

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